

CALIFORNIA CONDOR **(*Gymnogyps californianus*)**

STATUS: Experimental nonessential population designated for Southwest reintroduction (61 FR 54044, October 16, 1996). Endangered (32 FR 4001, March 11, 1967) with critical habitat in California (41 FR 187, September 24, 1976).

SPECIES DESCRIPTION: One of the largest flying birds in the world. Adults weigh approximately 10 kg (22 lb) and have a wing span of up to 2.9 m (9.6 ft). Adults are black, with white underwing linings and edges. Head and neck are mostly naked gray skin in juveniles and red in adults. Five to six years are required for individuals to attain adult characteristics. Member of the Cathartidae, or New World Vultures, family.

HABITAT: Nesting sites are in various rock formations, including caves, crevices, and potholes in isolated regions of the southwestern U.S. Foraging for carrion occurs over long distances, as a condor can travel 80-160 km (48-96 miles) per day in search of food. Flights follow routes over foothills and mountains. Roosting is usually on rock cliffs, snags, or in live conifer stands. These areas are important for resting, preening, and socializing.

RANGE: Historic: Isolated regions of the California Coast, Sierra Nevada, and Transverse Ranges, western Texas, Arizona, Utah, New Mexico, and Baja California Norte, Mexico.

Current: Captive-reared condors have been reintroduced to Hopper Mountain and Bitter Creek National Wildlife Refuges, and Los Padres National Forest in Kern, Ventura, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Barbara Counties, California, and further north in Ventana Wilderness Sanctuary in Monterey County in California. USFWS began reintroducing an experimental nonessential population of California condors in the Vermilion Cliffs area in northern Arizona (Coconino County) and southern Utah in December 1996 and Hurricane Cliffs on the Arizona Strip in December 1998. California condors may be found in Mohave, Coconino, Navajo, and Apache counties, Arizona.

REASONS FOR DECLINE/VULNERABILITY: Little information exists to document the precise causes of mortality to the condor, but they probably have been diverse. Former threats include shooting, egg and quill collection, and ceremonial use. Other threats include collisions with human-made structures, electrocution on powerlines, and poisoning from lead, DDT, cyanide, and anti-freeze.

NOTES: A Recovery Plan was completed in 1974 and revised in 1979, 1984, and 1996. A copy of the recovery plan is available online at <http://arizonaes.fws.gov/Documents/RecoveryPlans/California%20Condor%201996.pdf>

Critical habitat includes nine areas in six California counties encompassing about 230,800 hectares (570,400 acres).

Currently, there are 34 condors in the wild in two areas in California, and 25 free-flying condors in the Grand Canyon area in Arizona. On March 25, 2001, the first egg laid by reintroduced condors was discovered in the Grand Canyon. That egg was broken by the condors and the nesting attempt failed.

Listed as a Species of Special Concern by the State of Arizona.

Field notes on the Vermilion and Hurricane Cliffs reintroduction are at www.peregrinefund.org.